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Grade 12
First Place

“Service, Leadership, Example”

Thirty-nine years ago, Dr Martin Luther King, Jr. stood on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial and told the world of his dreams for a peaceful, open-minded brotherhood of men. He imagined a world of bountiful equality and scarce injustice. Today, largely due to his efforts, Americans have opened their hearts to people of all races, nationalities, and walks of life. While some Americans may still struggle to love their neighbors, as a whole, Dr. King elevated the spirit of his countrymen.

He did not do so by being a successful businessman or powerful ruler. Dr. King was never known for constructing glorious feats of architecture or advancing the scientific world by leaps and bounds. But Dr. King left timeless impressions on this planet. He did so by being a leader, a servant, and a teacher.

I cannot say where life will take me tomorrow, let alone in ten years. But I realize no matter where I may end up, I will always be a teacher and an example to those around me. Every action of mine affects the people in my life, whether it is good, bad, or indifferent. They will mold their lives according to my example, either to mimic one of my virtues or to avoid one of my vices. It is my duty not only to be the best example I can, but also teach, nurture, and encourage those who interact with me.

I must also be a leader. Leading does not always carry a grand title or reward with it. Leading is often taking on the responsibilities and burdens that are too heavy for anyone else to carry. Leading is being prepared to help when I am asked, and also going

(Bill Vargo, Jr. continued)

out of the way to find out how I can be of service. Many times leaders are called upon to be a good follower. They need discipline and strong work ethic. I have a tenacity, responsibility, and leadership skills to triumph over adversity no matter where I may end up.

To have any affect on this world, I must also be a servant. Successful people with stable lives and well-founded consciences will have no need for me. It is my job to reach out to the poorest of the poor, materially and spiritually. Any good teacher or leader must serve those who follow him. The foundation of their position as a role model consists of their efforts to better the condition of their fellow man.

In the future I may fulfill these roles in countless vocations. I may perhaps be a professional teacher or a religious leader. I may become involved in my community government or serve my country at a higher level. Wherever life may lead me, it is my responsibility to improve the situation of those I encounter through my service, leadership and example.